Faith & Inspiration

Divine, Human, and Artificial Intelligence

By Vincent V. Marshburn

Humanity's intellectual capacity and curiosity are products of our nature — namely, being made in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27).

God himself exhibits tremendous brilliance, insight, and creativity (Proverbs 3:19–20; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 55:9), and so we likewise possess a propensity for mental acumen, analysis, and innovation. We are driven to seek knowledge and understanding to help discern and conceive our world around us; we are compelled to invent and build to help establish order and agency.

As part of our exercise of intelligence, we produce tools which are intended to facilitate our perpetual crusade for comprehension. For instance, remarkable advances have been made in the field of electronics and digital technology. The current fashionable trend is an iteration of "artificial intelligence," precipitating myriad reactions, speculations, and apprehensions.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines artificial intelligence (AI) as "the capability of computer systems or algorithms to imitate intelligent human behavior." The concept of artificial intelligence is not new and can be traced back to the 1930s through 1950s in the work of Alan Turing. Contemporary implementations of machine learning are focused on generative AI and Large Language Model (LLM) techniques, which have demonstrated some impressive proficiencies.

Generative AI constructs "new" or reformulated content from existing material using pattern identification and prediction algorithms. A large language model represents the underlying software architecture which supports this process. With these tools, it is possible to compile, compose, or alter text, images, audio, and video in often unique, extraordinary, even unusual ways.

There is strong promotion for widespread adoption of generative AI by individuals, organizations, and governments. Indeed, we can readily observe the embedding or linking of these systems into many of the technology tools and products which we have come to depend on, including web search engines, office productivity software, and consumer devices.

Despite the accolades and hype, the shortcomings of this technology include the fact that it exhibits a distinct aptitude for producing results that may be inaccurate, incomplete, or inconsistent, or may simply lack any sense of authenticity or appeal. This is primarily due to the manner of its operation, which, despite many claims, does not involve all the singular qualities of human thought but rather is based on an internal logic which approximates human language to a high degree, but not perfectly.

Quite a number of issues have arisen during the fairly rapid emergence of this technology. Legal and ethical concerns stem from the manner in which developers of LLMs have obtained intellectual property without consent or compensation for purposes of "training" such systems. Mental health concerns exist about the psychological influence of LLM outputs.

Some sources have demonstrated cognitive debt or "mental atrophy" as a consequence of the use of generative AI. Furthermore, content is being conceived that some — perhaps many — would consider question-able, immoral, or illegal. And then there are the potentially significant impacts on the economy and environment as we observe attempts to replace human labor with AI, along with immense energy requirements.

Much of the anxiety surrounding the current trajectory of reliance on AI pertains to the notion of displacing human cognition, sensibility, and judgment with machine logic and efficiency. This is, of course, not a new complication and will most likely continue to confront us for the foreseeable future.

In an episode of the original Star Trek television series, the starship USS Enterprise is summoned to participate in a test of computer automation capability. Scientist Richard Daystrom arrives aboard the ship to install the most advanced computer system invented, the M-5 unit, which is intended to take over all ship-wide operations, including command. Daystrom explains that M-5 has been programmed to think and behave in a very human manner, including self-defense, using his own cerebral pattern. Many of the crew, including Captain James Kirk, wonder if this is a sign of human obsolescence.

When additional Starfleet starships arrive to challenge the Enterprise in a simulated war game, M-5 responds by forcing the Enterprise to destroy one of the other ships, the Excalibur. The remaining ships react by preparing to counterattack the now apparently AI-controlled Enterprise.

Dismayed at the egregious loss of life purportedly caused by his own hubris and ego, Daystrom suffers a mental breakdown. Kirk manages to interact with the rogue machine and, leveraging its simulated "humanity," convinces the computer that it has committed an improper and illicit act by causing deaths, contrary to its primary directive of protecting life. M-5 concedes to the logic and powers off.

In the meantime, the other starships are closing in on the Enterprise. With the communications system previously deactivated by M-5, Kirk orders the Enterprise's defense shields to be disabled, hoping the other ships will interpret this as an absence of aggression. The captain of the Lexington, Bob Wesley, orders the fleet to hold fire.

Captain Kirk, science officer Spock, and ship's physician Doctor McCoy discuss and analyze the situation. Regarding M-5's realization of its responsibility for fatalities, Kirk concludes: "Daystrom felt such an act was against the laws of God and man. The computer that carried his engrams also believed it." Spock is curious about the fleet's final response to the Enterprise's dilemma.

KIRK: … I knew Bob Wesley. I gambled on his humanity. … His logical selection was compassion.

MCCOY: Compassion. That's the one thing no machine ever had. Maybe it's the one thing that keeps men ahead of them. Care to debate that, Spock?

SPOCK: No, Doctor. I simply maintain that computers are more efficient than human beings, not better.

Artificial intelligence, like any technology, is just another tool at humanity's disposal. A tool can be utilized constructively or destructively, depending on how it is wielded. The tool itself has inherent limitations. There are those within the modern milieu who confidently anticipate that AI will solve the various presumed crises that face humanity. Some may look upon AI as a contrivance of human ingenuity which will provide miraculously contrived solutions to our problems.

The literary phrase deus ex machina (Latin for "god from the machine") is intended as a critique of fabricated resolutions to dramatic conflict derived from "god-like" story elements. It seems a fitting description for the kind of hyper-optimism about technology assumed by various sources.

From the beginning, humanity has sought knowledge apart from God (Genesis 3). The deception was in being persuaded that becoming "like God" and knowing "good and evil" were somehow withheld from us. We were already made in God's image. We already had access to the preeminent source of all knowledge: the very Creator of the universe.

In the end, we are not called to seek or rely on deus ex machina but rather to exercise integrity, faith, and discernment. We are called to rely on God himself for counsel and direction (e.g., Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:5; Job 28:28; James 1:5).

Rather than entrusting our fate to artificial intelligence, we should ultimately trust divine intelligence to inspire and guide our human intelligence.

CITY OF
FLORIDA CITY
GATEWAY TO THE FLORIDA KEYS AND THE EVERGLADES

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
CITY OF FLORIDA CITY

All residents, property owners and other interested parties are hereby notified of a City Commission meeting for consideration of Second and Final Reading of the Ordinance referenced below on Tuesday, February 10th, 2026 at 7:30 PM. The meeting will be held in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall, 404 West Palm Drive, Florida City, Florida.

ORDINANCE NO: 26-01

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FLORIDA CITY, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 2 "ADMINISTRATION," ARTICLE II "CITY COMMISSION," DIVISION 2 "MEETINGS," SECTION 2-42 "AGENDA REQUESTS" AND SECTION 2-43 "ORDER OF BUSINESS"; PROVIDING FOR UPDATED PROCEDURES FOR AGENDA SUBMISSIONS AND THE ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

Anyone desiring to appeal any decision of the City Commission must arrange for a verbatim record of the proceedings, including testimony and evidence upon which any appeal may be issued (F.S. 286.0105). The ordinances may be inspected by the public at the Clerk's Office- City Hall, 404 West Palm Drive, Florida City, FL during regular business hours.

The Office may also be contacted for information regarding these proceedings. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, all disabled persons desiring to participate in these proceedings and needing special accommodations to do so because of that disability should contact the City Clerk at 305-247-8221.

JENNIFER A. EVELYN
CITY CLERK
January 30, 2026

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